

Application No. 10/802,401
Amendment dated July 28, 2005
Reply to Office Action of April 28, 2005

REMARKS

Claims 1 -15 are pending. Claims 7 and 8 are withdrawn pursuant to applicant's previous provisional election. Additionally, claim 1 is canceled, and claims 16-19 are added herein. Accordingly, claims 2-6 and 9-20 are at issue.

The abstract is amended to address the objections in the Action.

Formal drawings are being prepared to address the objections noted in the Action and will be submitted once they are completed.

The objections to the disclosure noted in the Action are addressed by amendments thereto.

The objections to claims 6, 12 and 13 are addressed by amendments to claims 6 and 12.

Claims 1-6 and 9-15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite.

Claim 1 is canceled and replaced with added claim 16. Added claim 16 clearly defines the claimed elements as requested in the Action, and is believed to obviate the indefiniteness rejection.

Claims 1-6 and 9-15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,079,736 to Koide. Claim 1 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as anticipated by Publication No. U.S. 2002/0124682 to Schutz.

The rejections, as they may apply to the claims presented herein, are respectfully traversed.

Claim 16 is directed to a steering wheel for mounting of a build-on part thereto and includes a steering wheel skeleton and foam material surrounding the skeleton. A holding part is substantially fixed relative to the skeleton by the foam material so that a first portion of the holding part is in the foam material and a second portion of the holding part projects therefrom for mounting of the build-on

part thereto. Neither of the relied upon references disclose or suggest the use of foam material for substantially fixing a holding part, as set forth in claim 16.

Koide is directed to a mounting arrangement for an air bag apparatus 30 that is to be secured to steering wheel 10. In the Action, the bracket 32 and supporting member 44 thereof are identified as corresponding to the holding part. However, the bracket 32 is not substantially fixed relative to the steering wheel 10 by the resin 14a or the pad cover 42 as claimed in the Action. Instead, Koide makes it perfectly clear that the bracket is screwed to the steering wheel, and teaches specific structure for this purpose. In particular, the bracket 32 has upstanding side wall portions 32A that include mounting holes 32C for being aligned with corresponding mounting holes 18A formed in the steering wheel spokes 18 for screwing the bracket to the spokes. Similarly, the supporting member 44 has an L-shaped end portion 44A that is screwed to a corresponding end portion 20A of mounting portion 20 of the steering wheel rim 14. Accordingly, it is clear that Koide contemplates that the bracket 32 be fixed to the steering wheel 12 by being screw fastened thereto, and not by the resin coating 14A on the steering wheel rim 14 or the pad cover 42 that extends over the air bag body 40. This is in sharp contrast to the holding part of claim 16 that is substantially fixed relative to the steering wheel skeleton by the foam material. Accordingly, it is believed claim 16, and claims 2-15, 17-20 which depend cognately therefrom, are allowable over Koide.

Several of the dependent claims also recite limitations that delineate over Koide. For example, added claim 17 depends from claim 16 and calls for the skeleton to be free of apertures or recesses for supporting the holding part in substantially fixed relation thereto. As detailed above, the steering wheel 12 and bracket 32 of Koide include mounting holes precisely for this purpose. Added

claim 18 depends from claim 16 and states that the holding part first portion is spaced from the skeleton and embedded in the foam material to be surrounded thereby. Referencing the Attachment to the Action, the surrounded part is indicated as being the L-shaped end portion 44a of the bracket 32. This bracket portion 44a does not have a portion embedded in foam material to be surrounded thereby. Instead, the pad cover 42 only extends on the upper side of the radially extending section of the bracket portion, and thus is not surrounded thereby. Further, the depending section has no corresponding foam material thereon and clearly is not embedded in foam material. Claim 4 depends from claim 16 and recites an interspace, which is filled by the steering wheel foam material between the steering wheel skeleton and the holding part. In the Attachment, the interspace is indicated as being defined by a hook flange of the bracket 32. However, this only creates a space between the flange and the wall of the bracket itself that has the pad material therebetween rather than between the bracket 32 and the rim 14 or spokes 18 of the steering wheel 10. Claim 5 depends from claim 16 and calls for the holding part to surround the steering wheel skeleton at least partially at one point. Koide does not show that the bracket 32 surrounds the steering wheel 10, either at the rim 14 or at the spokes 18. Instead, the bracket 32 rests on the steering wheel hub 16 and has its wall portions 32a and flange portion 44a bearing flush against the corresponding steering wheel flange portions of the spokes 18 and the mounting portion 20. Accordingly, it is believed these dependent claims are allowable for these additional reasons.

Schutz, similar to Koide, is directed to a mounting arrangement for a gas bag module 14 on the steering wheel. Schutz teaches a steering wheel skeleton 10 that has a foam casing 12 in which recesses 50 are formed to have a corresponding configuration to bushes 42 that are to be received therein (see FIG. 5). Also, the

bushes 42 are on bolt guides 32 that are formed as one piece with the air bag housing 16. Springs 41 are mounted about the bolt guides in abutment with the bushes with the recesses sized with sufficient depth to allow the guides to travel downward though the bushes against their spring bias for horn actuation. Accordingly, the guide assemblies including the guides 32, springs 41, and bushings 42 are not substantially fixed relative to the steering wheel skeleton 10 by the foam casing 12. To this end, with only the guide assemblies, the module 14 could be lifted up with the guide assemblies pulled out of their foam recesses. Schutz teaches that the structure for holding the gas bag module 14 against such removal from the steering wheel skeleton 10 includes hooks 44 that depend from the base 20 of the air bag housing 16 and detent piece 46 connected to the steering wheel skeleton. The hooks and corresponding detent pieces act as a stop to prevent the module 14 from being pulled up off the skeleton 10, while nevertheless also allowing the downward displacement of the module 14 for horn actuation (see ¶ [0019]). Accordingly, Schutz fails to disclose or suggest a holding part that is substantially fixed relative to the steering wheel skeleton by the foam material surrounding the steering wheel skeleton, as required in claim 16. Thus, it is believed that claim 16, and claims 2-15, and 17-20 which depend cognately therefrom, are allowable over Schutz.

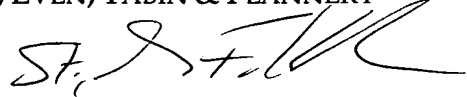
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Based on the foregoing, reconsideration and allowance of claims 2-15, and consideration and allowance of claims 16-20, are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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By

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Favakeh', written over a horizontal line.

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